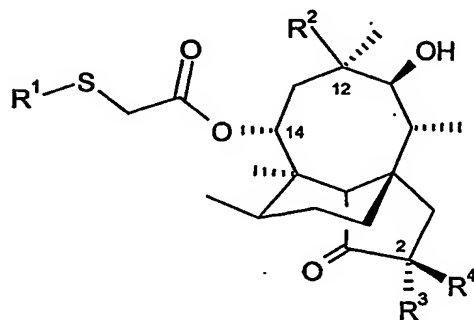
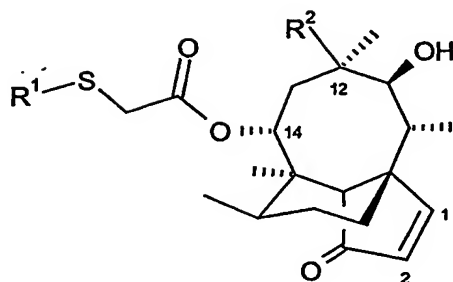


1. A compound of formula (IA) or (IB):

5



(IA)



(IB)

in which:

- 10 R^1 is a five- or six-membered aryl or heteroaryl ring substituted by a carboxylic acid group and optionally further substituted by up to four groups independently selected from halogen, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, aryl, aryl(C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₁₋₆)alkoxy, (C₁₋₆)alkoxy(C₁₋₆)alkyl, halo(C₁₋₆)alkyl, aryl(C₁₋₆)alkoxy, hydroxy, nitro, cyano, azido, amino, mono- and di-*N*-(C₁₋₆)alkylamino, acylamino, arylcarbonylamino, acyloxy, carbamoyl, mono- and di-*N*-(C₁₋₆)alkylcarbamoyl, (C₁₋₆)alkoxycarbonyl, aryloxycarbonyl, ureido, guanidino, (C₁₋₆)alkylguanidino, amidino, (C₁₋₆)alkylamidino, sulphonylamino, aminosulphonyl, (C₁₋₆)alkylthio, (C₁₋₆)alkylsulphinyl, (C₁₋₆)alkylsulphonyl, heterocyclyl, heteroaryl, heterocyclyl(C₁₋₆)alkyl and heteroaryl(C₁₋₆)alkyl, or two adjacent ring carbon atoms may be linked by a (C₃₋₅)alkylene chain, to form a carbocyclic ring;

R^2 is vinyl or ethyl; and

- 20 R^3 is hydrogen, hydroxy or fluorine and R^4 is hydrogen, or R^3 is hydrogen and R^4 is fluorine; or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof;

with the proviso that the compound of formula (IA) is not (2-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester.

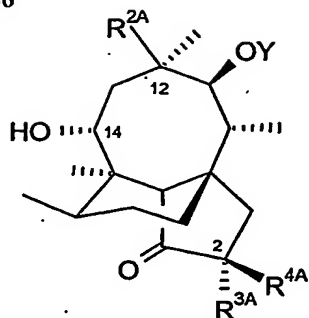
25

2. A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^1 is a five- or six-membered aryl ring or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring containing up to three heteroatoms independently selected from nitrogen, sulphur or oxygen, substituted by a carboxylic acid group.

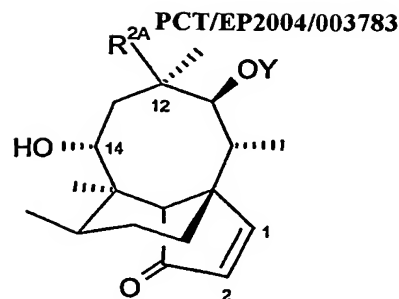
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3. A compound according to claim 1 or 2 wherein R^1 is a six-membered aryl ring or a six-membered heteroaryl ring containing one or two nitrogen atoms, substituted by a carboxylic acid group.

4. A compound according to any one of the preceding claims wherein R¹ is phenyl or pyridyl, substituted by a carboxylic acid group.
5. A compound according to claim 1 selected from:
5 (4-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester;
(4-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid 19,20-dihydro-mutilin 14-ester;
(3-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester; and
(5-carboxylato-pyridin-2-yl-sulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester;
or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof.
- 10 6. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, diluent or carrier.
- 15 7. A compound as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, for use in therapy.
8. Use of a compound as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, in the manufacture of a medicament for use in the treatment
20 of a microbial infection.
9. Use according to claim 8 wherein the microbial infection is a skin or soft tissue infection.
- 25 10. A method of treating microbial infections in animals, especially in humans and in domesticated mammals, which comprises administering a compound according to any one of claims 1 to 5, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, or a composition according to the invention, to a patient in need thereof.
- 30 11. A method of treatment of skin and soft tissue infections in humans, which comprises topically administering a compound according to any one of claims 1 to 5, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, or a composition according to the invention, to a patient in need thereof.
- 35 12. A process for preparing a compound of formula (IA) or (IB) as claimed in claim 1 which process comprises:
- (a) reacting a compound of formula (IIA) or (IIB):

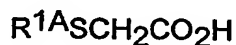


(IIA)



(IIB)

- 5 in which Y is hydrogen or a hydroxy protecting group, and R^{2A}, R^{3A} and R^{4A} are R², R³ and R⁴ as defined in claim 1 or groups convertible R², R³ and R⁴, with an active derivative of a carboxylic acid of formula (III):



(III)

10

where R^{1A} is R¹ as defined in claim 1 or a group convertible to R¹, under ester forming conditions and, where required or desired,

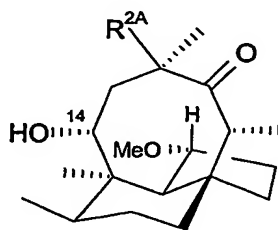
converting Y to hydrogen,

converting an R^{2A}, R^{3A} and R^{4A} group to a R², R³ and R⁴ group, and/or

- 15 converting one R², R³ and R⁴ group to another R², R³ and R⁴ group;

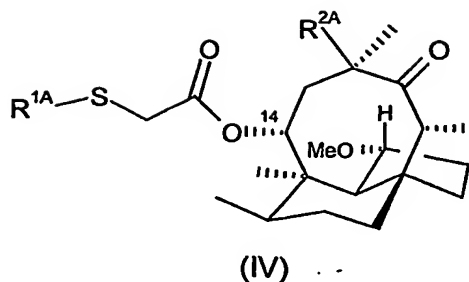
(b) for a compound of formula (IA) in which R³ and R⁴ are both hydrogen, reacting an *epi*-mutilin compound of formula (IIC):

20



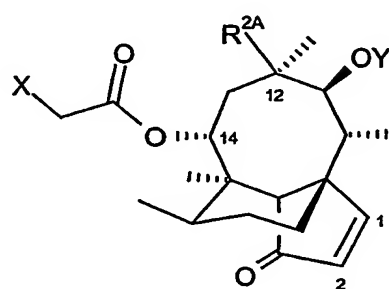
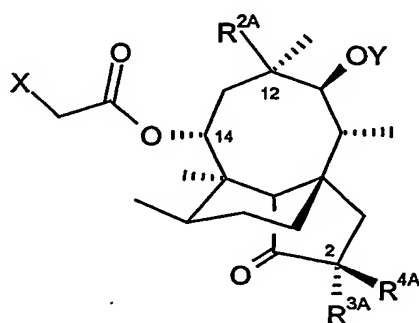
(IIC)

- 25 in which R^{2A} is R² as defined in claim 1, or a group convertible to R²;
with a compound of formula (III) as hereinbefore defined;
to give a compound of formula (IV):



5 then treating the product with an acid and, where required or desired, converting an R^{1A} group to an R^1 group and an R^{2A} group to an R^2 group;

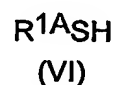
(c) reacting a compound of formula VA or VB



10

wherein X is a leaving group, Y is hydrogen or a hydroxy protecting group, and R^{2A} , R^{3A} and R^{4A} are R^2 , R^3 and R^4 as defined in claim 1 or groups convertible to R^2 , R^3 and R^4 , with a compound of formula (VI):

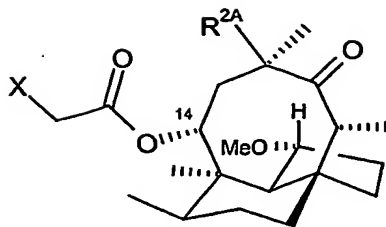
15



20 where R^{1A} is R^1 as defined in claim 1 or a group convertible to R^1 and, where required or desired,
converting Y to hydrogen,
converting an R^{1A} , R^{2A} , R^{3A} or R^{4A} group to an R^1 , R^2 , R^3 or R^4 group, and/or
converting one R^1 , R^2 , R^3 or R^4 group to another R^1 , R^2 , R^3 or R^4 group; or

25

(d) reacting a compound of formula (VC):



(VC)

- 5 where X and R^{2A} are as defined for formulae VA and VB, with the compound (VI), then treating the product with an acid and, where required or desired, converting an R^{1A} or R^{2A} group to a R¹ or R² group, and/or converting one R¹ or R² group to another R¹ or R² group.